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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Fifth session
Maastricht, the Netherlands, 30 June and 1 July 2014
Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda
Programme of work and operation of the Convention: Strategic Plan for 2015–2020

Draft decision V/5 on the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020

Summary

At its fourth session (Chisinau, 29 June–1 July 2011), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) requested the Working Group of the Parties to develop a strategic plan for the Convention covering the period 2015–2020, to be ready for consideration and adoption at the fifth ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties.[1]

The present document, prepared by the Bureau, sets out a draft decision on the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 for the Aarhus Convention. As the key elements of the current Strategic Plan 2009–2014 (ECE/MP.PP/2008/2/Add.16, decision III/8)[2] appear to be still relevant, they were maintained, but the content was slightly updated. The introduction, vision and mission for the plan were drafted in the light of the Chisinau Declaration (see ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1),[3] adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session. To make the plan more reader-friendly, focal areas, strategic goals and means of implementation (tables) were merged into one section, "Framework for implementation". The content of the focal areas, strategic goals and objectives is identical to that of the current Strategic Plan 2009–2014, but the order of objectives was

[1] See ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1, decision IV/8; available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/mop4/mop4.doc.html.
[2] Available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/mop3/mop3.doc.html.
[3] Available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/mop4/mop4.doc.html.

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reconsidered. In addition: objective I.16 of the current Strategic Plan was removed and the subject matter is addressed in the section on mission and vision; objectives I.8 and II.2 of the current Strategic Plan were omitted, as they referred to establishing pollutant release and transfer registers and the entry into the force of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers; a new objective dedicated to the reporting mechanism was introduced; objective I.2 of the current Strategic Plan was merged with objective I.1; objective I.15 of the current Strategic Plan was deleted, but its substance is preserved in objective I.9; and the scope of former objective III.7 was extended to refer to all three pillars of the Convention and it is now objective III.2.

The framework for implementation was also further elaborated, through a clearer presentation of the distribution of responsibilities for national implementation and international cooperation and through the introduction of some indicators or targets, where feasible, so that progress in the implementation of the future strategic plan can be assessed. In addition, a section on roles and responsibilities was included to clarify the tasks of the different actors.

The previous version of the document (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2013/7)[4] was considered by the Working Group of the Parties at its sixteenth meeting (Geneva, 19–21 June 2013) and it was subsequently distributed for consultation to Parties and stakeholders.

In view of its mandate to "make such proposals and recommendations to the Meeting of the Parties as it considers necessary for the achievement of the purposes of the Convention" (ECE/MP.PP/2/Add.15, para. 2 (d)), at its sixteenth meeting, the Working Group of the Parties requested the Bureau to prepare an accompanying draft decision and to revise the draft strategic plan for the Working Group's consideration, revision and approval and for its subsequent submission to the Meeting of the Parties for consideration.

The Bureau considered the comments received and prepared the present, revised version of the document for further consideration and approval by the Working Group at its seventeenth meeting (Geneva, 26–28 February 2014).

At its seventeenth meeting, the Working Group revised and approved, as amended at the meeting, the draft decision on the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 (AC/WGP-17/CRP.5)[5] and requested the secretariat to submit it to the Meeting of the Parties for consideration at its fifth session.

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[4] Available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/wgp16.html.

[5] Available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/wgp17.html.

The Meeting of the Parties,

Recalling its decision IV/8 on strategic planning, through which it requested the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, with the assistance of the secretariat and the appropriate involvement of the public, to develop a strategic plan for the Convention covering the period 2015–2020, based on the experiences and results of the implementation of the current Strategic Plan 2009–2014, for consideration and adoption at the fifth Meeting of the Parties,

Welcoming the work undertaken by the Working Group of the Parties and the Bureau, under the leadership of the Chair, to develop a draft plan,

1. *Adopts* the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 as set out in the annex to this decision;

2. *Agrees* that the Plan will guide the implementation and further development of the Convention up until the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties;

3. *Also agrees* that a mid-term review of the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 should be considered at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties, focusing in particular on the progress indicators, which would facilitate the preparation of the next strategic plan.

Annex

Introduction

1. Environmental rights and democracy are essential elements of good governance and informed decision-making and a prerequisite for achieving the objective of sustainable development. Since the adoption of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992, and continuing through the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference), there has been a continued reinforcement of environmental democracy worldwide and progress in recognizing the economic benefits of sustainability, as well as the potential opportunities it presents for society as a whole. The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) strongly contributed to putting Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration into practice and has proved an effective tool for promoting effective governance and green economy.

2. Through their ratification of the Convention, 46[6] countries from throughout Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as the European Union have committed themselves to ensure that they have in place adequate laws and practices relating to access to information, public participation and access to justice in the environmental field. Furthermore, initiatives have been taken by Parties to promote the Convention and its principles globally and to encourage interested non-Parties to participate in its activities.

3. Nonetheless, significant problems remain. The national implementation reports, coupled with the experience gathered through the work of the Convention's compliance mechanism and task forces, indicate that implementation of the access to justice provisions of the Convention appears to be the most difficult area for Parties. Although Parties report that they have elaborated legislation on most aspects relating to access to information and public participation, implementation of these provisions has also proven challenging in some countries.

4. The Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 set out in the present document gives priority to securing effective implementation by Parties, while recognizing the need to promote the lessons learned and the experience of Parties in all countries that wish to accede to the Convention or to replicate its achievements. Furthermore, it acknowledges the necessity of addressing new thematic challenges within its scope. The Strategic Plan also recognizes the cornerstone role of civil society in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development and the green economy. The document outlines the overall aspiration of Parties for 2020, while priorities for specific periods will be defined in greater detail in the respective work programmes and will take into account the financial resources available.

I. Vision and mission

5. Worldwide, social, economic and environmental challenges are becoming increasingly complex and interrelated. This fact should not, however, discourage the public from involvement in decision-making and Governments must provide the necessary stimulus, tools, information and assistance to enable transparent decision-making processes in order to ensure informed, balanced and effective public participation. Making decisions and decision-making processes fully accountable to the public whom they should serve

[6] To be updated in the light of possible new ratifications.

should become an essential, and not only procedural, matter. Furthermore, Governments should recognize that the Convention establishes the grounds for future developments and should endeavour to raise the accepted international standards in the future, based upon experience with higher standards on the domestic level.

6. The economic and social value of the environment and the environmental impacts of today's actions should be fully reflected in all decisions at the policy, strategic and project levels, particularly in the light of the increasing pressures put on resources by rapid global economic development and population growth. The social dimension of sustainable development is also closely linked to public participation in decision-making.

7. Our long-term mission is to minimize the depletion of environmental resources that should remain for future generations and to ensure sustainable and environmentally sound development through strengthening participatory environmental democracy in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and beyond.

8. Our immediate mission is:

(a) As a first priority, to work towards full implementation of the Convention by each Party where this has not already been achieved and to encourage and support its use by the public;

(b) To increase the impact of the Convention by increasing the number of Parties within the ECE region and by encouraging States outside the region to accede to the Convention, replicate it or implement its principles, and by promoting Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development;

(c) To keep the provisions and principles of the Convention under constant review and consider forward-looking interpretations of the Convention and its further development so as to ensure that it continues responding to modern challenges and provides an adequate instrument to achieve its objectives.

9. This vision and mission are part of our broader aspiration to achieve a more equitable world and a better quality of life for all.

II. Roles and responsibilities

10. Parties should play a proactive role in promoting and facilitating the implementation of the Strategic Plan in their countries and in multilateral processes under the Convention. They should assess and regularly follow up its implementation at all levels of governance. In this context it should be understood that "Parties" includes all relevant public authorities at the national, subnational and local levels (responsible for, e.g., environment, justice, water, agriculture, transport, industry, health, education and foreign issues). Focal points could contribute, as appropriate, to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

11. Stakeholders, including the general public, civil society organizations, experts from the education and scientific sectors, the health sector, the private sector, industry, transport and agriculture, trade and labour unions, the mass media, various communities, indigenous peoples and international organizations, are encouraged to support implementation of the Strategic Plan. Civil society organizations promoting environmental protection have an important role in implementation by alerting the public to its rights and by supporting Governments in understanding and acting upon their obligations.

12. The secretariat facilitates implementation of the Strategic Plan through servicing the Convention's bodies, organizing regional and subregional capacity-building activities and undertaking advisory and promotion work.

III. Framework for implementation

A. Focal area I: Implementation

Strategic goal I
Full implementation of the Convention by each Party

To achieve full implementation of the Convention by each Party, Parties will implement the objectives set out below as far as possible.

Objective I.1: Each Party has a clear, transparent and consistent framework for the implementation of all provisions of the Convention, comprising not only the necessary constitutional, legislative and regulatory provisions, but also the operational procedures and mechanisms required for their practical application both in a national context as well as in transboundary situations, without discrimination as to citizenship, nationality or domicile.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Identify and remediate any deficiencies in the implementation framework to ensure that adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures, and institutional mechanisms are in place. All activities are to be implemented through a participatory process, such as a robust consultation in the preparation of the National Implementation Report (NIR).	Parties, partner organizations,[a] stakeholders	Adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures, and institutional mechanisms are in place. A participatory mechanism, such as a robust consultation in the preparation of the NIR, to monitor progress in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention is operational. Good quality and timely submitted NIRs. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International[b]		
Strengthen Parties' capacities to implement the Convention and address obstacles to its implementation through the compliance mechanism, sharing good practices and developing guidance material.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies[c] Parties and the secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed). Effective implementation of decisions regarding Parties' non-compliance.

[a] Wherever reference is made to partner organizations, it is understood that the organizations participating in the Convention's capacity-building coordination framework and other relevant organizations will be involved.

[b] Refers to multilateral processes established under the Convention.

[c] Activities of the Meeting of the Parties and other bodies under the Convention also involve stakeholders.

Objective 1.2 (former 1.14):[7] The Convention's mechanism for compliance review fulfils the role of an effective instrument to address compliance problems that cannot be resolved at the national level. The findings and recommendations of the Compliance Committee are regarded by Parties as an authoritative source of advice on the implementation of the Convention and are used by them to improve their national practices in the best way possible.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Implement effectively the decisions regarding non-compliance by individual Parties adopted by the Meeting of the Parties. Having a system in place to monitor the implementation of decisions, involving all relevant authorities, communicants and other interested stakeholders.	Parties Interested stakeholders	Having a system in place for monitoring the implementation of decisions. Decisions of the Meeting of the Parties are implemented effectively and reported through NIRs Positive feedback from Parties and stakeholders
International		
Review of submissions, communications and referrals and preparation and publication of findings and recommendations. Thematic review of generic compliance problems. Periodic review of the implementation of decisions on compliance by individual Parties with the Convention adopted by the Meeting of the Parties.	Meeting of the Parties, Parties Compliance Committee Secretariat	Adoption of the findings and recommendations by the Compliance Committee and adoption of the respective decisions by the Meeting of the Parties. Positive feedback from Parties and stakeholders.

[7] Wherever reference is made to former objectives, see document decision III/8 on the Strategic Plan 2009–2014 (ECE/MP.PP/2008/2/Add.16), available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/mop3/mop3.doc.html

Objective I.3 (new objective): The reporting mechanism under the Convention fulfils the role of an effective instrument to monitor the Convention's implementation

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Preparing national implementation report through wide multi-stakeholder consultations.	Parties Interested stakeholders	Good quality reports have been prepared through wide multi-stakeholder consultations.
International		
Review of the implementation.	Meeting of the Parties, Parties Compliance Committee Secretariat	Timely submission of good quality reports. Good quality synthesis report is drawn up with the major conclusions drawn from the submitted NIRs.

Objective I.4 (former I.3): In implementing the Convention, each Party not only complies with its mandatory provisions, but also endeavours to give effect to its provisions whose application is discretionary.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Develop adequate legislation, regulations and implement required measures. Pilot projects.	Parties Stakeholders	Adequate legislation and regulations are developed and the required measures are taken. Pilot projects are implemented. Positive feedback from Parties and stakeholders. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Strengthening Parties' capacities through sharing good practices and developing guidance material.	Meeting of the Parties, relevant Convention bodies and the secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Objective I.5 (former I.4): Environmental education is widely available and promotes active and responsible behaviour among the public as regards the environment, including the exercise of the rights guaranteed by the Convention.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Addressing provisions and principles of the Aarhus Convention through formal, informal and non-formal programmes on education for sustainable development (ESD).	Parties, Stakeholders, in particular educational institutions, local and subnational authorities Media Civil society organizations	Adequate educational programmes and curriculum. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Strengthening Parties' capacities through sharing good practices and developing guidance material.	Secretariat, mostly through implementation of the ECE Strategy for ESD[a] Partner organizations	The objective is adequately addressed through the work on the ECE Strategy for ESD and Convention bodies, as appropriate (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Objective I.6 (former I.5): Public authorities at all levels and in all relevant sectors of government are aware of the obligations under the Convention and allocate as far as possible the resources needed to comply with them.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Information, training, organizational and budgetary measures. Translate text of the Convention into national and subnational languages and distribute it widely; provide adequate training to all relevant staff of the authorities. Strengthening of national focal points. National capacity-building[a] activities.	Parties All public authorities concerned within Parties Stakeholders Partner organizations	The required information, training, organizational and budgetary measures are taken. National focal points have capacity to carry out the required work. Resources are allocated as far as possible. Convention is translated into national and subnational languages and distributed widely. Adequate training is provided regularly to relevant staff in the authorities.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
		Programmes for capacity-building activities are being implemented. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Regional and subregional capacity-building activities. Strengthening Parties' capacities through sharing good practices and developing guidance material.	Partner organizations and the secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed)

[a] Wherever reference is made to capacity-building activities, it is understood that the organizations participating in the Convention's capacity-building coordination framework will be involved.

Objective 1.7 (former 1.6): The implementation of the Convention leads to the development of an open administrative culture which supports public participation and transparency in environmental matters and values them as positive contributions to democratic, effective and good governance. Public officials concerned have and apply the knowledge and skills to provide assistance and guidance to the public to facilitate the exercise of its rights.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Political support at the highest level. Encourage proactive officials. Exchange of best practices and national capacity-building for officials at all levels. Regular awareness-raising. Establishing and implementing the operational procedures and mechanisms promoting an open administrative culture.	Parties All public authorities concerned within Parties Partner organizations	Programmes for capacity-building activities are being implemented. The operational procedures and mechanisms are established and implemented. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Regional and subregional capacity-building activities. Sharing good practices.	Partner organizations and the secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared).

Objective 1.8 (former 1.12): Each Party provides for appropriate recognition of and support to civil society organizations promoting environmental protection as important actors in advancing democratic debate on environmental policies, raising public awareness and mobilizing and assisting citizens in exercising their rights under the Convention and contributing to its implementation.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Identifying and remediating any deficiencies in the framework to ensure that adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures, and institutional mechanisms are in place. National capacity-building and awareness-raising activities. Preparing and disseminating adequate resource material in national and subnational languages to assist civil society organizations in exercising their rights under the Convention. Provision of financial and expert assistance. Consideration of measures for the implementation of article 3, paragraph 8, such as "whistleblower" protection.	Parties Donor institutions Partner organizations Civil society organizations	Measures are implemented. Programmes for capacity-building and awareness-raising activities are implemented. Civil society organizations participate effectively in the related activities. Support for public interest environmental civil society organizations is being provided. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Strengthening Parties' capacities through sharing good practices.	Parties Donor institutions Partner organizations Civil society organizations Secretariat	Civil society organizations participate effectively in the activities at the international level. Good practices have been shared through regional and subregional capacity-building activities and the work of the Convention's bodies.

Objective 1.9 (former 1.13): Civil society organizations and the general public are aware of their rights under the Convention and assert them to effectively engage in addressing environmental and sustainable development issues and to advance both environmental protection and good governance, thus contributing to sustainable development.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Public awareness campaigns. Support for public interest environmental civil society organizations, including environmental law organizations.	Parties Civil society organizations Partner organizations Academic Institutions Donors	Measures for raising public awareness are being implemented. Support for public interest environmental civil society organizations is being provided. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Regional and subregional activities.	Parties Partner organizations Donors Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Secretariat	Civil society organizations and the general public have the opportunity to participate effectively in the activities under the Convention.

Access to information

Objective 1.10 (former 1.7): Public authorities at all levels and in all relevant sectors of government have well-established information policies and mechanisms, under which environmental information of a high quality is routinely provided and proactively disseminated to the public in a user-friendly manner, making full use of electronic tools where available.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Further development of systems to collect environmental information, including environment-related health information. Further development of public registers, national nodes and information centres.	Parties All stakeholders, including health professionals' organizations Partner organizations	Environmental information of a high quality is routinely provided and proactively disseminated to the public in a user-friendly manner. Good practices are reported through NIRs. Review mechanism on access to information.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
Increasing compatibility of electronic databases containing environmental information.		
Implementation of recommendations adopted through decision II/3 and implementation of other decisions of the Meeting of the Parties related to access to information.		
International		
Regional and subregional capacity-building activities.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).
Strengthening Parties' capacities through sharing good practices and developing guidance material.	Secretariat	

Public participation

Objective I.11 (former I.9): Public participation procedures are regarded by public authorities and all other actors concerned as an integral part of the preparation of policies, plans, programmes, projects, legal instruments and executive regulations that may have a significant effect on the environment, and are implemented in their full scope. Prospective applicants are, where appropriate, encouraged to undertake proactive efforts to identify and inform the public concerned and enter into discussions with them at an early stage of planning, allowing for the effective participation of all interested members of the public.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Informational and organizational measures to facilitate public participation procedures.	All authorities within Parties responsible for carrying out public participation procedures	Measures have been taken to ensure that effective public participation procedures are in place.
Training and other capacity-building activities of officials and executives in communication with the general public.	Private sector Partner organizations	Good practices are reported through NIRs. Public authorities demonstrably take account of public input.
Application of recommendations developed under the Convention and		

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
other decisions of the Meeting of the Parties related to public participation. Decisions broadly reflect the public input.		
International		
Strengthening Parties' capacities through regional and subregional capacity-building activities, sharing good practices and developing guidance material.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Partner organizations Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Access to Justice

Objective I.12 (former I.10):

(a) Each Party ensures access to administrative or judicial review procedures that can provide timely and effective remedies for members of the public who consider that their rights under the Convention have not been respected;

(b) Each Party empowers members of the publ. here they meet the criteria, if any, laid down in national law, to challenge acts and omissions that contravene provisions of national environmental law. Any such criteria should be established taking fully into account the Convention's objective of guaranteeing access to justice;

(c) Each Party undertakes genuine efforts to reduce and eliminate financial and other barriers that may prevent access to such review procedures and establishes, where appropriate, assistance mechanisms to that end.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Identifying and remediating any deficiencies through a multi-stakeholder dialogue to ensure that adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures and institutional frameworks are in place with regard to (a) remedies, (b) standing and (c) financial barriers. Capacity-building activities. Implementing decisions of the Meeting of the Parties related to access to justice.	Parties All authorities within Parties responsible for the functioning of administrative or judicial review procedures, in particular ministries of justice Civil society organizations Public interest lawyers Partner organizations	Effective access to administrative or judicial review procedures is ensured through: (a) providing timely and effective remedies to members of the public; (b) empowering members of the public to obtain access to justice; and (c) reducing and eliminating financial and other barriers that may prevent access to review procedures and through establishing assistance mechanisms.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
		Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Strengthening Parties' capacities through regional and subregional capacity-building activities, sharing good practices, maintaining jurisprudence database and developing guidance material.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Partner organizations Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Objective 1.13 (former 1.11): Judges, public prosecutors and other legal professionals are familiar with the provisions of the Convention and are ready to exercise their respective responsibilities to uphold them.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Information, education/training and capacity-building measures for legal professionals in accordance with decisions on access to justice adopted by the Meeting of the Parties. Taking measures to make decisions of courts, and whenever possible of other judicial bodies, publicly accessible.	Parties, in particular, ministries of justice or similar national bodies Judicial training centres Law schools Professional organizations Civil society organizations	Adequate curricula/training programmes. Measures are being implemented. Decisions of courts, and whenever possible of other judicial bodies, are publicly accessible. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Strengthening Parties' capacities through regional and subregional capacity-building activities, maintaining jurisprudence database, sharing good practices and developing guidance material.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Partner organizations Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

B. Focal area II: Expansion

Strategic goal iI
Increase the impact of the Convention in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and beyond

To increase the impact of the Convention in the ECE region and beyond, Parties will implement the following objectives as far as possible:

Objective II.1: The number of Parties to the Convention within the ECE region continues to increase steadily throughout the plan period.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Build public and political support for ratification in non-Parties. Bilateral consultations to discuss and overcome obstacles to ratification.	Parties Partner organizations Civil society organizations Interested non-Party within the ECE region	Completed ratification procedures.
International		
Strengthen Parties' capacities through capacity-building activities, sharing good practices, developing guidance material and providing assistance upon request.	Secretariat Civil society organizations Parties Interested non-Party Partner organizations	Increased number of Parties.

Objective II.2 (former II.3): The amendment to the Convention on public participation in decisions on the deliberate release into the environment and the placing on the market of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is approved by a sufficient number of Parties to enter into force by 2015 and is progressively implemented.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Build public and political support for ratification in Parties. Parties seek bilateral consultations with other Parties that have ratified the amendment, to discuss and overcome obstacles to ratification and receive/provide capacity-building assistance and share good practices.	Interested Parties Partner organizations Civil society organizations	Completed ratification procedures. Good practices are reported through NIRs.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
International		
Strengthening the capacities of the Parties concerned through capacity-building activities, sharing good practices and provision of advisory assistance upon request. Use of regional and international cooperation arrangements to raise interest in the GMO amendment.	Secretariat Civil society organizations Parties concerned Partner organizations, in particular the secretariat of the Cartagena Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity.	Increased number of ratifications.

Objective II.3 (former II.4): States in other regions of the world effectively exercise their right to accede to the Convention. Parties actively encourage accession to the Convention by States of other regions of the world.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Build public and political support for ratification in non-Parties. Bilateral consultations between Parties and non-Parties to discuss and overcome obstacles to ratification, provide capacity-building assistance and share good practices with interested non-Parties.	Parties Partner organizations Civil society organizations Interested non-Party outside the ECE region	Completed ratification procedures. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Strengthening the capacities of interested non-Parties through capacity-building activities, sharing good practices, translating guidance material into national and subnational languages and providing advisory and technical assistance upon request. Use of regional and international cooperation arrangements to raise interest in the Convention.	Secretariat Civil society organizations Parties Interested non-Party outside the ECE region	Increased number of Parties.

Objective II.4 (former II.5): The Convention sets an internationally recognized standard for access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, and inspires the development of similar instruments in other regions of the world thereby putting Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration into practice.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Promoting the Convention: (a) at national level to national focal points dealing with other international forums; and (b) through bilateral cooperation with countries in other regions through providing capacity-building assistance and sharing good practices.	Parties Partner organizations Civil society organizations	Convention promoted effectively within interministerial processes and through Parties' positions in major international forums, as well as among countries in other regions. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Participation in key regional and international events to publicize the Convention. Encouraging references to the Convention in other forums (political and academic). Cooperating with other regional bodies interested in the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. Providing capacity-building and advisory assistance.	Parties Meeting of the Parties and its Bureau and the Working Group Secretariat Civil society organizations Partner organizations	Convention promoted effectively in major international forums and among countries in other regions.

Objective II.5 (former II.6): The Parties to the Convention actively promote the application of its principles in international environmental decision-making processes and within the framework of international organizations relating to the environment, and endeavour to influence the practices of international forums in matters relating to the environment, in particular the development and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Consideration of possible measures to give effect to the Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus	Parties Partner organizations Civil society organizations	Increased number of international forums that apply the Almaty Guidelines in their procedures.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
Convention in International Forums at the national level. Implementation of the decisions of the Meeting of the Parties related to application of the Convention's principles in international environmental decision-making.		National coordination mechanisms are in place and are working effectively. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Strengthening Parties' capacities to apply the Almaty Guidelines. Promotion of the application of the Almaty Guidelines in international forums. Adoption of appropriate practices and procedures in international forums; review of existing practices. Consultations with other forums.	Parties Secretariat Civil society organizations Partner organizations Meeting of the Parties and its Working Group	Application of the Convention's principles is promoted effectively in major international forums. The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies. Parties coordinate collectively in other forums on matters relevant to the application of the Convention's principles.

Objective II.6 (former II.7): The Parties to the Convention, both in their participation in international policymaking and in their national implementation activities, achieve synergies between the Convention and other international environmental and human rights agreements.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Coordinated implementation of the Convention and the provisions on access to information and public participation of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).	Parties	Synergies between the implementation of the Convention and other international environmental and human rights agreements are ensured. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Organization of joint activities with other MEAs, in particular those of ECE, and human rights bodies.	Parties Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies	Joint activities with other MEAs and human rights bodies are implemented effectively.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
	Secretariat Civil society organizations Partner organizations	Parties coordinate collectively in other forums on matters relevant to the application of the Convention.

C. Focal area III: Development

Strategic goal III
Further development of the provisions and principles of the Convention where necessary to ensure that it continues to achieve its objectives

To achieve the further development of the provisions and principles of the Convention where necessary to ensure that it continues to achieve its objectives, Parties will endeavour to implement the following objectives:

Objective III.1: The provisions of the Convention are interpreted in a dynamic way, enabling practice to adapt to experience acquired in the course of implementation, new developments in society, technological innovation and new environmental challenges.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Forward-looking interpretation of the Convention in view of new environmental and development challenges.	Parties Civil society organizations Private sector	Adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures, and institutional frameworks are in place. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Strengthening Parties' capacities and addressing obstacles in implementing the Convention through the compliance mechanism, sharing good practices and developing guidance material.	Parties Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Objective III.2 (former III.7): The Parties explore possibilities for the development of measures under the Convention to ensure greater opportunities for public participation in policy formulation and implementation concerning each of the three pillars of the Convention, so as to contribute to sustainable development, recalling the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the related Plan of Implementation and the Rio+20 Declaration. Furthermore, the Parties share their experiences in implementing the Convention with other forums interested in using them as a basis or a source of inspiration for further strengthening participatory democracy in their respective fields.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Use of participatory procedures in the revision and/or development of national strategies for sustainable development and for the development of sustainable development goals.	Parties	Provisions for effective public participation are implemented. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Exchange of experience and best practices on the impact of instruments of participatory democracy on decisions related to all dimensions of sustainable development, public participation in policy formulation and implementation contributing to sustainable development.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Parties Secretariat Civil society organizations Partner organizations	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Access to information

Objective III.3: The range of environmental information that is made available to the public is gradually widened, inter alia, by developing and implementing mechanisms enabling more informed consumer choices as regards products, thereby contributing to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Through exchange of information and good practice, consideration is given as to how to promote the increasing accessibility of environmental information held by the private sector, taking into account relevant issues of confidentiality of commercial and industrial information and protection of intellectual property rights, in line with the current approach under the Convention.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Identify and remediate through a participatory intersectoral and multi-	Parties Civil society organizations	Environmental information, including related to products is made available effectively.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
stakeholder process any deficiencies in the national framework to ensure that adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures and institutional frameworks are in place. Capacity-building activities.	Private sector Partner organizations	Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Regional and subregional capacity-building activities, exchange of information and best practice in promoting the accessibility of environmental information held by the private sector based on national experience, preparing studies and guidance material.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Civil society organizations Private sector Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant studies and guidance material has been developed).

Public Participation

Objective III.4: The provisions on public participation in decisions having a significant impact on the environment, encompassing, inter alia, product-related decision-making, are assessed, further reflected on and, where appropriate, elaborated upon.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Identify and remediate through a participatory intersectoral and multi-stakeholder process any deficiencies in the national framework to ensure that adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures and institutional frameworks are in place. Application of recommendations developed under the Convention with regard to relevant provisions on public participation. Capacity-building activities.	Parties Civil society organizations Private sector	Measures are taken. Provisions for effective public participation are implemented. Capacity-building activities are implemented. Good practices are reported through NIRs.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
International		
Regional and subregional capacity-building activities, exchange of information and promotion of good practice with regard to the implementation of the provisions on public participation in decisions having a significant impact on the environment.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Civil society organizations Partner sector Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Objective III.5: The provisions of the Convention relating to public participation in the preparation of plans, programmes and policies relating to the environment, as well as executive regulations and other generally applicable legally binding normative instruments that may have a significant effect on the environment, are applied, kept under review and, as appropriate, further developed to enhance public participation from an early stage in strategic decision-making processes. This should be done with appropriate public involvement and taking fully into account the specific nature and constraints of such processes and related obligations under other MEAs, in particular the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA) to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention), and by involving its bodies in such processes.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Identify and remediate through a participatory intersectoral and multi-stakeholder process any deficiencies in the national framework to ensure that adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures and institutional frameworks are in place. Application of the recommendations developed under the Convention with regard to relevant provisions on public participation. Capacity-building activities.	Parties	Measures are taken. Provisions for effective public participation are implemented. Capacity-building activities are implemented. Good practices are reported through NIRs.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
International		
Regional and subregional capacity-building activities, exchange of information and promotion of good practice with regard to implementation of the provisions of articles 7 and 8 of Convention and in context of the implementation of the SEA Protocol.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Parties Civil society organizations Partner organizations Espoo Convention/ Protocol on SEA bodies Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Objective III.6: To enhance the effectiveness of public participation, the development and application of innovative forms and tools of public participation beyond traditional consultation procedures are encouraged, the development of the capacity of civil society organizations is supported and civil society is strengthened.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Promote good practices regarding different modes of public participation.	Parties Civil society organizations Partner organizations	Innovative and effective forms and tools of public participation are in place. Capacity of civil society organizations and civil society is strengthened. Good practices are reported through NIRs.
International		
Regional and subregional capacity-building activities, exchange of information and promotion of good practice on innovative and effective forms of and tools for participation.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Parties Civil society organizations Partner organizations Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).

Access to Justice

Objective III. 7 (former III.6): Work on promoting effective access to justice continues, in particular by way of further information exchange, capacity-building and exchange of good practice, inter alia, on the issue of adequate and effective remedies, taking fully into account the Convention's objective of, inter alia, guaranteeing access to justice. The extension of the range of members of the public having access to administrative and judicial procedures is explored, with particular focus on access by environmental civil society organizations. Further steps are taken to remove or reduce financial and other barriers and to establish assistance mechanisms where appropriate.

Indicative types of activity/measure	*Possible implementing partners*	*Indicators of progress/targets*
National		
Review of implementation of article 9, paragraphs 2, 3 and 4, through a multi-stakeholder dialogue to identify gaps and obstacles to implementation.	Parties Civil society organizations	Adequate measures are implemented.
Reducing or removing financial and other barriers and provision of assistance mechanisms where appropriate.		
International		
Regional and subregional capacity-building activities, exchange of information and promotion of good practice with regard to implementation of the provisions of article 9.	Meeting of the Parties and relevant Convention bodies Parties Civil society organizations Partner organizations Secretariat	The objective is adequately addressed through the work of the respective Convention bodies and through regional and subregional capacity-building activities (e.g., good practices have been shared and relevant guidance material has been developed).